



Utah Department of Health

No Longer a Dilemma: Utahns with Disabilities Can Work **AND** Have Health Care

State program could help 21,000 people with serious health conditions who want to work

Before the Medicaid Work Incentive (MWI) program began, many Utahns with disabilities had to choose between working and having health care benefits. If individuals with disabilities increased their income above the poverty level, they would have to pay a fee to receive Medicaid: the higher the income, the more they would have to spend down. There was no advantage in working. This dilemma was faced by hundreds of Utahns with disabilities who wanted to work and who were capable of working but needed health care benefits.

The goal of the Medicaid Work Incentive program is to encourage people with disabilities to achieve their earning potential and maintain health benefits.

Now, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Medicaid Work Incentive program allows individuals with disabilities who work to pay a monthly premium as a percentage of their income. About one half of their earned income is not counted in figuring the premium owed so there is an advantage and incentive to work. Those who are on the program are excited about MWI as they too have great contributions to make in the workplace.

To qualify there is an upper limit on the income a family can have and still get Medicaid through this program—currently \$23,928 yearly for a single person, or \$48,384 yearly for a family of four (which is 250% of the federal poverty level for 2005). The program allows recipients to have assets (for example, a savings account) up to \$15,000. This is compared to asset limits of \$2,000 for an individual or \$3,000 for a couple for other Medicaid eligible groups. Retirement accounts are not counted as assets in this program. Therefore, a person with a disability can work, accumulate some savings, and prepare for retirement.

Employees on Medicaid can take advantage of employers' private health plans to whatever extent the plans cover their health care needs—and use Medicaid to supplement what they don't cover.

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The employer's plan pays first, then Medicaid pays what the private plan won't, as long as the charges are medically necessary.

The UDOH provides many important benefits for people with disabilities, some of which may not be available through private employer-sponsored plans. Certain expensive psychiatric medications and therapies are sometimes essential for individuals with disabilities to have a decent quality of life—and to work. More than 21,000 individuals in Utah have disabilities severe enough to qualify them for the public Medicaid Disability program. The Medicaid Work Incentive program provides a solution to the dilemma faced by many Utahns with disabilities who want to work and can work.

Who Benefits from Medicaid Work Incentive?

- Individuals who have a disability as determined by Social Security Administration or Utah's Medicaid Disability Office.
- Individuals who are employed.
- Households with countable net income at or below 250% of the federal poverty level.
- Individuals may have assets up to \$15,000—not counting a home the person lives in, a vehicle, children's assets, or retirement funds.

How Does It Work?

- Individuals pay a monthly premium of 15 percent of their countable income.
- One half of earned income is not counted in calculating the premium base.
- Individuals must be working, but there is no minimum amount or number of hours required.
- Individuals receive full Medicaid health care benefits.

If you have a disability and want to apply for the MWI, call the Medicaid hotline at 1-800-662-9651 or apply at any of the UDOH Medicaid Eligibility Offices or Department of Workforce Services.